

DIGEST
(cont'd):

parks and recreation policing. The heads of their respective departments would comply with the same requirements placed upon the chief of police. These workers could not participate in the police department's pension or retirement system. If they have been employed as law enforcement personnel for at least six months, no civil service examination would be required.

GOVERNOR'S
REASONS
FOR VETO:

Expanding coverage to certain law enforcement personnel who are employed by the City of Houston but who are not part of the Houston Police Department would be an undue and unnecessary expansion of the civil service system in Houston. It would lessen the effectiveness and efficiency of city government.

SPONSOR'S
VIEW:

Rep. Green said the Governor simply accepted the view of the City of Houston without examining the needs of the law enforcement officers involved. More officers will get fed up with the system. The already high turnover rate will increase as a result of this veto.

Public school employees group insurance
(HB 769 by Atkinson)

DIGEST:

This bill would have established a group insurance program for public school employees working more than half-time. The program would have been administered by the State Board of Education. It also proposed a similar program for school district employees, to be administered by the Teacher Retirement System. Employees would be covered either by a state or local plan. All school district employees would have been eligible for optional coverage. The state would have paid part of the monthly premium for every individual covered.

GOVERNOR'S
REASONS
FOR VETO:

Many employees would prefer salary increases to state funding for group health insurance. This bill would have provided no real benefit to public school employees while increasing the administrative burden on local school districts. Furthermore, it is bad public policy to give the Teacher Retirement System so much power over the day-to-day operation of school districts.

SPONSOR'S
VIEW:

This was a bad bill that should have been vetoed, Rep. Atkinson said. Many teachers didn't want to participate, and the Teacher Retirement System should not have been given the authority that it would have been given by this bill. (The original bill was rewritten in House committee and Rep. Atkinson's effort to substitute his version on the floor was unsuccessful. The bill was further altered in the Senate.) Atkinson said the lack of funding for the version that passed was a key reason for his agreement with the veto.)

NOTES:

For further information on this bill, see the HSG Special Legislative Report No. 74, Major Issues of the 67th Legislature, and the analysis in the Daily Floor Report of April 15, 1981.

Special election dates
(HB 805 by Colbert)

DIGEST:

HB 805 would have required emergency special elections called by the Governor to be held on Tuesday or Saturday. The Governor would have had to specify nature of the emergency when ordering an election on a date other than one of the four uniform election days.

GOVERNOR'S
REASONS
FOR VETO:

A vacancy created in an elective office can occur for a variety of reasons. Many factors must be taken into consideration in calling a special election, such as combining a special election with a local election to save money, and whether the Legislature is in session. Each case is different, and the Governor often needs the flexibility in current law.

SPONSOR'S
VIEW:

Rep. Colbert said the Governor's veto encourages the continuation of a special election system that can be abused in a way that discourages voter turnout. "The Governor must have received some bad advice," Colbert said. All local elections must be held on four uniform election dates which are all on Tuesday or Saturday, so the bill would not have restricted his flexibility to call special elections on those days. The bill was meant to prevent situations such as occurred in Rep. Colbert's own district when a special election was held on a Thursday, and due to confusion about the election date, half the precincts had turnouts of 3 percent or less. "The Governor put partisan considerations above the need to assure maximum public participation in the electoral process."